

ANTIQUITIES OF PROVINCE WELLESLEY.

Col. James Low, who was for many years Superintendent in charge of Province Wellesley, makes the following reference to this subject in his "Dissertation on the soil and agriculture of Penang and Province Wellesley," published in Singapore in 1836.

"While employed several years ago in exploring the ruins of an ancient Boudhist temple in Province Wellesley,—an account of which I have promised to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta—I obtained a small coffee-pot which had been carefully built up with bricks at the depth of four or five feet. The lid was firmly baked, but on being handled, the vessel crumbled, nearly to pieces—within it was found the figure of a fowl constructed of thin silver wire, which also fell to pieces on being handled. But the bill and feet were perfect, being made of an alloyed metal, chiefly gold."

The writer gives no clue as to the whereabouts of this ancient Buddhist temple, but I imagine it to have been one of those singular mounds of shells which are to be met with in the north of Province Wellesley not far from the Muda river. They are composed of sea-shells of the kind called *kepah* and *karang* (cockles) by the Malays, though they are situated at some distance from the sea. No other shells of the kind are to be found near the place, I believe. I have been told by Malays in Province Wellesley that one of these mounds was opened and explored by Col. Low. If the others, left perfect by him, have escaped destruction at the hands of Chinese limeburners, they will probably be worth examination and description. "Goa kepah" (shell-cave), a place in the neighbourhood, no doubt takes its name from these mounds. I do not know if Col. Low carried out his intention of describing the results of his exploration. I have searched through the only volumes of the proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta to which I have access (vols. I, II and III.), but I have found no paper on the subject.

At the foot of Bukit Mertajam, on the South side, there is a block of granite on which some rude characters have been traced. The Malays call it *batu surat*, the rock of the writing. I believe that the inscription has never been deciphered and that the character has not been identified. When I saw it last (in 1874), it was difficult in places to detect the ancient inscription on the rugged face of the rock, its faint lines contrasting strangely with the deeply-cut initials of Col. Low on the same boulder.

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